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PALINDROME

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PALINDROME

REFLECTIONS IN THE SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE

Their physical and spiritual manifestations in printmaking process and concept, with particular focus on David Young Cameron's 'Ben Ledi'

Palindromos: Running back again (Greek)

The Landscape of Scotland has always been a contradiction of romantic sentimentalism and/or cultural integrity with physical exploitation and/or land management. From the majestic rolling hills and glens of deforested natural woodland to the relentless march of pylons across the heather, it is a land of inconsistencies and dichotomies.

And like the print that generally requires the artist to reverse or flip their view of that landscape, the engraved plate and flipped image, the lithography stone and inverted paper sheet, the picture plane becomes a visual palindrome running backwards and forwards, like a mirrored reflection of place and space.

Landscape artists through the centuries have investigated these dichotomies, a synthesis of process led question and image led answer (1, 2), but in this paper I aim to investigate this further. Can the artist/printmaker gain more legitimacy or validation through this transformation of palindromic and mirrored picture plane?

Does this palindromic inversion create an obstacle or an opportunity for the artist/printmaker to explore the landscape of Scotland providing an authentic filter for creativity, representation and expression.

I am particularly interested in David Young Cameron's 'Ben Ledi' (1911), which as well as requiring the artist/ to reverse the plane, the visual content of mountain reflected in heathland pool is also curiously inverted. The profile of the peak being almost bitten out of the pool's muddy edge in symmetrically flipped composition (Garton 1988) (3).

I would advocate that this is no coincidence of the contemporary viewers' framework, but a conscious concept of this early 20th century artist. Interestingly the original working sketch in pencil, crayon and conte (4) depicts Ben Ledi as a larger mass and the corresponding reflection matches this complementary depiction in scale and form, only differing in shade, from the rich/dark coloured tonal mass of peak to the light ephemeral form of the pool.

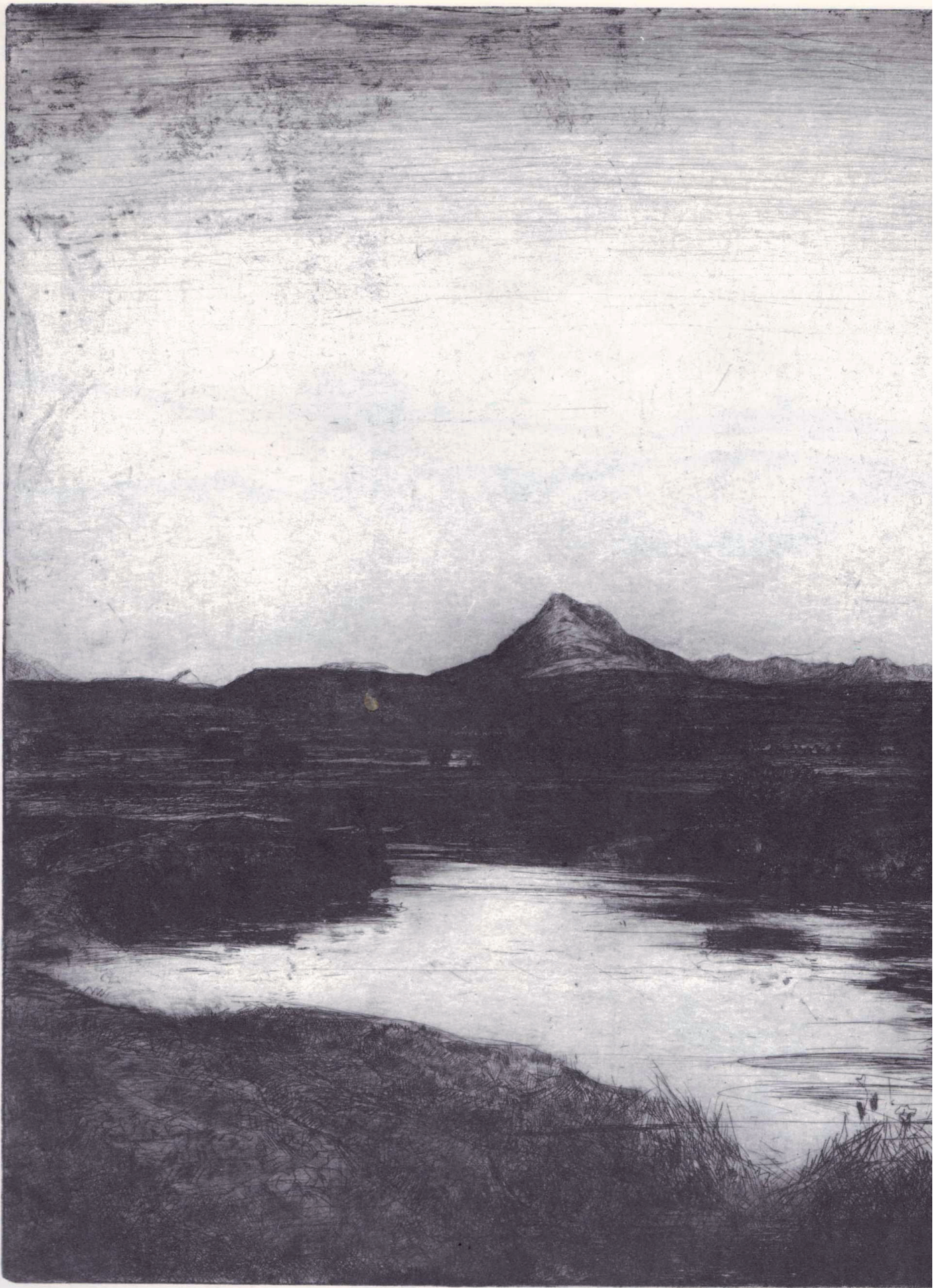
Here the cast shadow and gnomon are reversed, defying the physical weight of the geological mass of mountain, an elemental transmutation in the reflection from earth to water, or volcanic fire to air – the background reflected becomes the foreground or conversely the pool's form becomes the solid metamorphic entity, Ben Ledi – the Hill of God.

I venture that this palindromic inversion, this sublime reflection in the pool is intentional and as well as a physical manifestation of the transfer of reversed image to plate, by the artist/engraver, provides an opportunity for the artist to express and convey a deeper poignancy between the viewer and the traditional picture plane.

David Faithfull 2016

REFERENCES:

- (1) Turner inverts the geological structure in 'Fingal's Cave' in his series of Scott's *Poetical Works* (1834), to exploit his view of the setting sun.
- (2) Richard Long and Hamish Fulton in tracing their progress through the landscape also create this running narrative from conception to conclusion and paradoxically from finish to start, back to front.
- (3) Garton (1988) *Visions of Landscape* Garton & Co, London
- (4) <http://www.allinsongallery.com/cameron/benlediwc.html>
<https://art.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/30969>



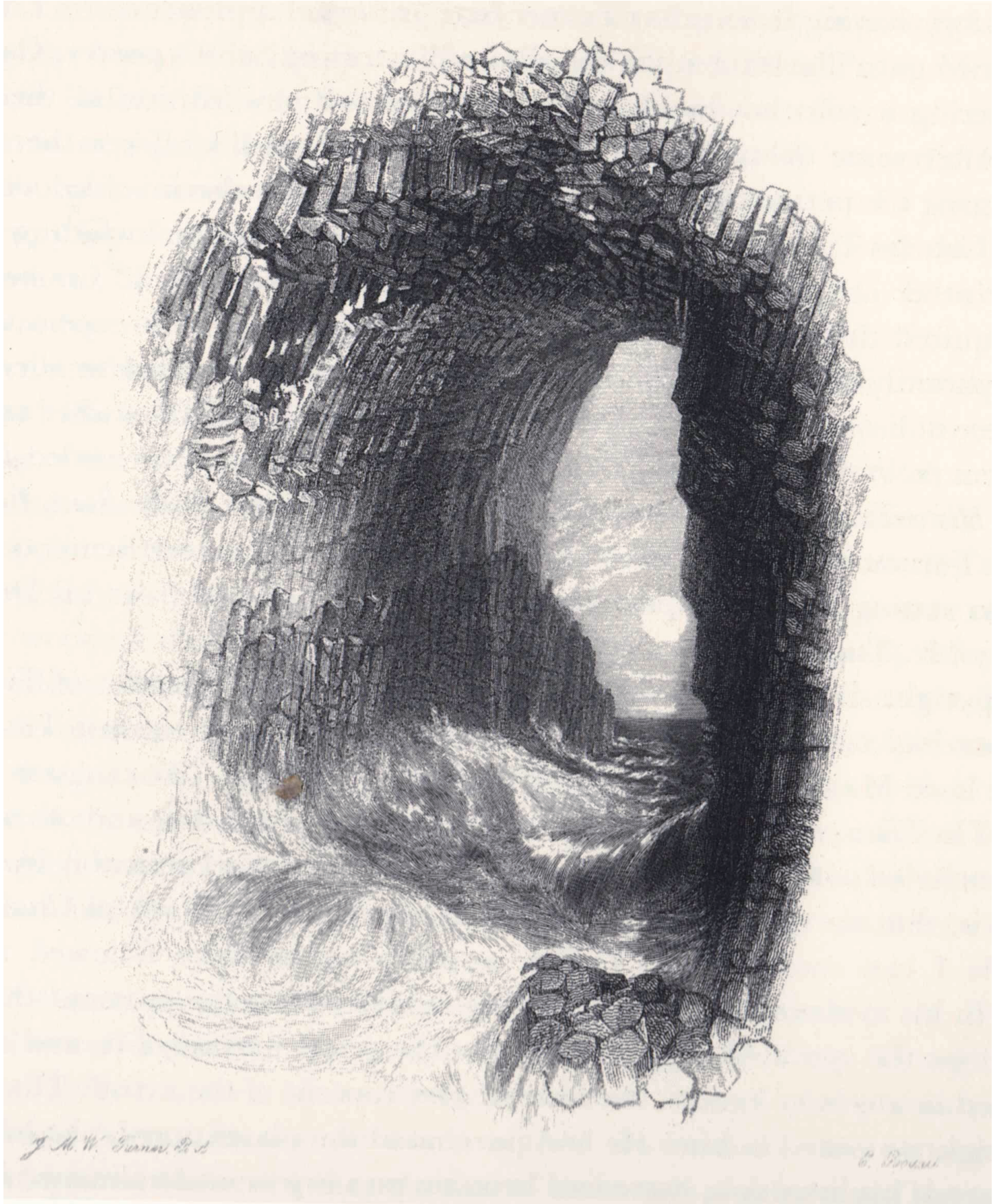


Ben Ledi. Etching & Drypoint



Ben Ledi. Pencil, conte crayon and watercolor on watercolor board

David Young Cameron, *Ben Ledi* Etching and Drypoint 1911



J.M.W. Turner *Fingal's Cave, Staffa* Engraving 1834

SEVEN ONE DAY WALKS
FROM AND TO KYOTO
TRAVELLING BY WAY OF MOUNT HIEI
WALKING ROUND THE HILL
ON A CIRCUIT OF ANCIENT PATHS
JAPAN 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 OCTOBER 1991

Hamnish Fulton Seven One Day Walks Collotype 1991

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